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ABSTRACT

In recent years, significant economic, social, and demographic changes have occurred in the United Kingdom. These changes have set the stage for a number of changes in the country's adult and vocational-technical education systems as well. There have been several notable developments with regard to the statutory education system (which provides for the education of children up to the age of 16). These include the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (a study of methods of organizing and managing secondary-level vocational and technical education), development of a general certificate of secondary education (which offers a single certificate for graduating students of all ability ranges as opposed to the previous system of two separate certificates), establishment of city and guild business and technician education council foundation programs, and development of a "National Curriculum 5-16." Three elements in the education and training system for persons over the age of 16 have been developed. These are the sixth form (for pupils who expect to transfer to higher education after the age of 18), the technical college (the traditional vocational education route), and the Youth Training Scheme (for early school leavers). In May 1985, the United Kingdom government established a committee to examine the question of vocational qualifications and the needs for the future. The committee developed a blueprint for action that called for, among other things, the establishment of a National Council for Vocational Qualifications and the creation of a new national framework for vocational qualifications based on four levels of achievement. When implemented, the recommendations are likely to have an enormous impact. (MN)

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SETTING DIRECTIONS FOR THE 1990's

EVOLVING DIRECTIONS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE - THE UNITED KINGDOM EXPERIENCE

One of the common characteristics of the international scene in vocational education and training is the increasing pace of change and the United Kingdom is no exception. Indeed the country is about to embark on a period of accelerating change as it prepares for the demands of the 1990's. I propose to outline some of the current activities leading towards these changes, but before doing so may I present my credentials.

The City and Guilds of London Institute, more widely known as 'City and Guilds', of which I am the Director-General, is Britain's leading technical testing and qualifying body. An independent organisation founded in 1878 and operating under a Royal Charter, it enjoys wide support from industry and works closely with the education service, government departments and the Training Commission (until recently called the Manpower Services Commission). Each year the Institute provides qualifications for more than half a million candidates in a wide range of subjects, and the certificates awarded are accepted world wide as evidence of the achievement of recognised standards in technical skills. Along with my staff I have been heavily involved in the discussions and actions which I shall be describing.

THE BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH CHANGES ARE TAKING PLACE

Apart from the review taking place in the education and training system, as a mature industrial nation, there have been significant changes in recent years, of which the following are some examples:-

(a) **Economic** - after a period of economic difficulty the United Kingdom economy is now strong and growth in the economy is taking place at the rate of about 4.5% per annum (in manufacturing as much as 6%). The balance of payments is satisfactory, inflation is under control and personal wealth is increasing principally through reductions in the tax burden. Economic policy is based on a free market economy by increasing competitive activity and reducing institutional rigidity.

(b) **Industry and Commerce** - structural changes have taken place in the industrial base as traditional industries have declined and as service industries have expanded. With the introduction of new technologies the pattern of occupational change is a continuous one and the need for flexibility and adaptability

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in the workforce of some £24½ million is of increasing significance in national policies of vocational training.

(c) **Social attitudes** in a country noted for stability and the stratification of society the social and institutional infrastructure. is changing fast.

(d) **Demographic patterns** have the characteristics of many industrial countries where the declining birth rate of the 1960's and 1970's is now producing a significant reduction in the young age groups with a proportionate increase in older groups.

(e) **Expectations** continue to rise steadily mainly as a consequence of the explosion of educational opportunity in former years.

(f) **The certification** process is important as the demand for national certification of achievements continues to strengthen.

These and other developments have led to pressure for change in the statutory education system and to demands for change in the vocational education and training system at the same time. I propose to outline these changes in turn, firstly dealing with the statutory education system.

THE STATUTORY EDUCATION SYSTEM

The statutory education system which provides for the education of children up to the age of 16, with the addition of sixth forms for children aged 16 to 18, has been progressively adapting itself to pressures for an increasing vocational orientation at secondary level, (i.e. for children from the age of 14+). Notable developments have been:-

(a) **The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative**

The main purpose of the Initiative, (which operated on a pilot basis from September, 1983, with 14 initial projects, a further 48 in 1984, a further 12 in September 1985), has been to test methods of organising and managing the education of 14-18 year olds across the ability range to improve the provision of technical and vocational education in a way which will widen and enrich the curriculum and prepare young people for adult and working life. This has reinforced the general move towards the development of a broader and more relevant curriculum and closer collaboration between education and industry. In addition there have been

a number of initiatives which have had the same purpose stemming from collaboration between the Education Departments and the Department of Trade and Industry, such as:-

(i) British Schools Technology
(ii) School Curriculum/Industry Partnerships
(iii) Micros in Schools
(iv) Mini Enterprise in Schools
(v) Microelectronics Education Support Programmes

This TVEI project which has had to its greatest success with 14-16 year olds was extended to a national scheme from September 1987. The Government has set aside sums which build up from £12 million in 1987/88, to £41 million in 1988/89 and £84 million in 1989/90. The average annual expenditure over the 10 years of development will be £90 million to provide the necessary backing for the reorientation of the school curriculum towards a stronger vocational and technical basis.

(b) **The General Certificate of Secondary Education**

The former school leaving examinations of General Certificate of Education (for pupils of high academic ability) and Certificate of Secondary Education (for a broader range of pupils) have been merged as the General Certificate of Secondary Education. This school leaving examination is designed to be taken right across the ability spectrum. Although it is still subject based, there is to be greater emphasis on practical work and assessment of progress by using projects and assignments. Work in preparation for this new system started in September 1986 and the first candidates will take the examinations in June 1988.

(c) **City and Guilds and Business and Technician Education Council Foundation Programmes**

Alongside GCSE there have been developments, linked to TVEI of pre-vocational programmes for 14-16 year olds, building in the previous good features of the programmes of City and Guilds and BTEC. These new programmes were launched in September 1987 and they incorporate features from previous provision, such as opportunities for active learning, pupil teacher negotiation, formative and summative assessment, including the use of profiling, positive assessment criteria and in-built guidance and counselling.

The programmes use a framework approach to take account of the needs of the whole ability range as, increasingly, pre-vocational education has come to be recognised as an essential function of all pupils' general education rather than an alternative curriculum.

Case studies are utilised as a focus through which learning takes place as these integrate different elements of the framework and provide pupils with active learning opportunities and with a series of activities which are part of a coherent learning programme.

The aims of the provision are:-

(i) To provide pupils with opportunities to continue general education through a range of occupational and other relevant focusses;

and Specifically;

(ii) To provide pupils with opportunities to acquire and develop;

(a) skills of collecting, analysing and presenting information using a variety of numerical, graphical, oral and written techniques;

(b) social skills;

(c) skills in making, creating and controlling;

(d) decision making skills;

(e) knowledge and understanding from a number of contexts from the local and wider community, including local industry and commerce, voluntary and statutory social and community services, the local physical and cultural environment and local and central government using themes such as people, technology, art and design and money.

(iii) To provide pupils with opportunities to consider their own development and progression in relation to opportunities at 14-16 years of age and to opportunities post 16.

(d) **The National Curriculum 5-16**

A further step towards significant change in the education scene for the 1990's has been the publication, in July 1987, of the Consultative Document 'The National Curriculum 5-16'. This signifies the intention to introduce legislation to provide for a national curriculum in maintained schools in England and Wales. This has been followed by the publication of an Education Reform Bill, on November 20th, 1987, to be debated in Parliament from December onwards, with a view to passing legislation in 1988. The Bill provides for:-

(i) The establishment of a national curriculum for all pupils in maintained schools containing:

(a) Core subjects of English, Maths and Science;

+

(b) Foundation subjects including a modern foreign language, technology, history and geography, art, music and physical education and religious education;

(c) Additional subjects which will be limited to 10% of the curriculum.

(ii) The setting of attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements including a testing system for all pupils at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16;

(iii) The establishment of a 'record of achievement' system for all pupils by 1990;

(iv) Only external qualifications approved by the Secretary of State may be offered in maintained schools to pupils of compulsory school age.

The intention is that schools should have flexibility about how they organise their teaching. The description of the national curriculum in terms of foundation subjects is not a description of how the school day should be organised and the curriculum delivered. The clear objectives of what pupils should be able

to know, do and understand, will be framed in subject terms. Schools will be able to organise their teaching in a variety of ways. This flexibility, together with the time available outside the foundation curriculum should enable schools, while meeting the requirements of the national curriculum, to give special emphasis to particular subjects, (such as science and technology in the new City Technology Colleges which are being developed), and to build in the vocational emphasis being developed through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.

The Education Reform Bill, which also provides for considerable changes in the structure of the education system, such as new arrangements for governing institutions, provision for schools to opt out of the local authority control system, new financing arrangements and so on, is likely to take about a year to progress through Parliament before it becomes law. The taking of government powers to prescribe the curriculum is controversial and there will be much debate. Once it is passed (and it is unlikely to be altered significantly) the Act will underwrite the organisation of the education system well into the 21st Century.

AFTER 16 - EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Beyond the statutory school leaving age of 16 there have developed three elements in the education and training system:

(a) **The Sixth Form** - a proportion of children remain at school preparing for 'A' levels in academic subjects. These pupils expect to transfer at the age of 18 into the higher education system, where the academic test for admission to University is a minimum of 2 'A' levels at selected grades. This is a well established system, unlikely to be altered in the future and the only recent change has been the introduction of Advanced/Supplementary Examinations (A/S Exams) in a number of subjects. These are equivalent to half an 'A' level and they have been introduced in an attempt to broaden the sixth form curriculum. About a quarter of the age cohort are included in this system.

(b) **The Technical College** - The traditional continuative vocational education route is for students to transfer to technical colleges to take full time vocational courses. A further quarter of the age cohort uses this system which is being continuously extended. The Education Bill provides for colleges to become more indpendent of their parent bodies, the local education authorities, by the provision of financial independence, freedom from bureaucratic restraints and new governing arrangements linked directly to local employers. In these colleges students work towards the examinations of bodies such as City and Guilds

and there has been increasing emphasis in recent years on competence based studies linked directly to employment possibilities.

A recent development in schools and colleges have been courses for the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education for 16-17 year old which helps to form a bridge from the world of school to the world of work.

(c) **The Youth Training Scheme** - Many young people, however, leave school or college at 16 or 17. For them (about 50% of the age cohort) there is another broad route to qualification - the two year Youth Training Scheme. This grew out of a one year scheme which operated for a number of years. The Government is contributing well over £1 Billion a year towards the cost of this programme. There were 460,000 training places on the scheme this year and, in due course, the whole of the age group not attending school or college will be included in the scheme. The Youth Training Scheme is controlled by the Training Commission (formerly the Manpower Services Commission), a Government agency set up for the purpose, and the main objective is to provide a foundation of broad based vocational education and training and planned work experience which will give every young person taking part the opportunity to obtain a vocational qualification relating to competence in the workplace or to obtain a credit towards such a qualification. The qualifications are approved through a Youth Certification Board and many of them are provided by City and Guilds. The scheme is for all young people not at school or college whether they are employed or unemployed. Thus high quality vocational education and training is now available to all school and college leavers under 18. The systematic work related training which was available in the past, only to a minority of young people (mainly men) through apprenticeships, will in future be available more widely through this system. The old approach of training to perform only an immediate and limited job is being progressively replaced by training for competence suited to whatever sector or occupational group the young person enters.

As an addition to the training provision the Government has recently (19/11/1987) announced the development of a Unified Training Scheme for the unemployed absorbing the Community Programme, the Job Training Scheme, the Wider Opportunities Programme, the Employment Rehabilitation Scheme and schemes for minorities. The programme will have 600,000 places and a budget of £1.5 Billion and will provide vocational training end on to the Youth Training Scheme.

A systematic qualification system is being developed to embrace YTS and the Unified Training Scheme to articulate an industrial training route from the beginner stage to the professionally qualified, to match the already well established educational route through the higher educational system.

This major development merits more detailed examination.

CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM OF VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

In May 1985 the United Kingdom Government set up a committee to look at the whole question of vocational qualifications and the needs for the future. Within a year the Review of Vocational Qualifications Working Group, of which I was a member, completed its work and its Report was published on the 8th May, 1986. The Government's White Paper - "Working Together Education and Training", accepting in large measure the recommendations of the Report was published on 2nd July, 1986. The former prepared the Blueprint for Action and the latter, published remarkably quickly after the production of the Report, promised that action. The proposals when carried into effect are likely to be very significant.

A. The Proposed Objectives of the New System

The Review of Vocational Qualifications Working Group defined and tested out, through an Interim Report, which was widely supported in the country, the following statement of objectives for an improved system:

(a) **The General Objective of the System** should be:-

To develop a clear, coherent and comprehensive system of vocational qualifications, based on the assessment of competence directly relevant to the needs of employment and the individual;

and,

(b) **The Specific Objectives of the System** should be:-

(i) comprehensibility, i.e. it should be readily understandable by all;

(ii) Relevance, i.e. meeting the current and future needs of all young people;

(iii) Credibility, i.e. seen to offer benchmarks of knowledge, skill, understanding and performance recognised and valued by students, employers, trade unions, and education bodies;

(iv) Accessibility, i.e. open to all and allowing for proper progression;

(v) Cost effectiveness, i.e. in relation to the cost falling on individuals, providers, employers and the Government.

B. **The Form of the New System**

Following these objectives the Working Group produced its report amid a welcome spirit of harmony and, as already indicated, the Report's conclusions have been accepted by the Government and they are being put into effect. The principal recommendations that have been accepted are:

(a) The establishment of a National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), to provide a national focus for action to bring about a system of vocational qualifications to meet the agreed objectives. Urgent action has been taken to implement this for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. (Scotland may be included later). The Council was constituted in October 1986, staff were appointed and it has already moved on to achieve its first objectives.

(b) The creation of a new national framework for vocational qualifications based on four levels of achievement covering all vocational qualifications up to higher level professional qualifications and the provision for opportunity to progression to these qualifications.

The levels are:-

LEVEL	**Description of Standard**
I	Occupational competence in performing a range of tasks under supervision of a mainly routine and predictable character.
II	Occupational competence in performaing a wider range of more demanding tasks

LEVEL	Description of Standard
	with limited supervision. Competence at this level will typically require greater individual responsibility and autonomy than at Level I.
III	Occupational competence required for satisfactory responsible performance in a defined occupation or range of jobs.
IV	Competence to define and specify defined tasks, products or processes and to accept responsibility for the work of others. Competence in planning problem solving and design will frequently feature at this level.
V	Should reflect competence at professional level, with mastery of a range of relevant knowledge and the ability to apply it at a higher level than IV. (This is the subject of consultation with professional bodies at the present time).

(c) The existing examining and validating bodies retain their responsibilities for examining, measuring standards and validating, and those bodies whose provision meets specified criteria for inclusion in the framework will be accredited by the National Council and thus have their certificates endorsed by a National Vocational Qualification 'seal of approval'. It is important that it is not seen as the endorsement of the present certification of all existing examining and validating bodies. It presents a challenge to them all, against the background of the need for rationalisation, to provide for qualifications which can fit in with the national framework and meet these national requirements.

(d) These requirements are now articulated through the definition of a vocational qualification as:-

a statement of competence clearly relevant to work and intended to facilitate entry into, or progression in, employment, further education and training, issued by a recognised body to an individual. This statement of competence should incorporate the assessment of:

- skills to specified standards;
- relevant knowledge and understanding;
- the ability to use skills and apply knowledge and understanding to the performance of relevant tasks.

(e) The assessment of competence will be to standards specified by effective and appropriate industry bodies which are being identified across the whole range of industrial and occupational groupings. This is a key element in the setting up of the new structure and on the success in identifying and setting to work with industry bodies the whole process of moving vocational qualifications to a competence base depends. The Training Commission (formerly the Manpower Services Commission) is at present articulating the structure of these lead industry bodies which may, or may not be existing industrial training boards.

(f) Each of the industry bodies will be required to develop a formal working relationship with one or more of the educational examining and validating bodies accredited by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications to make the necessary adjustments to provide for the recognition of qualifications and to fit them to the national framework.

C. The Action Programme

The first objective given to the National Council was to agree and promulgate design criteria for the National Vocational Qualifications. This was done early in 1987. Then the task was to complete the first accreditations not later than the summer of 1987. The principal objective is to have the first four levels of the new framework fully in place by 1991.

The Government has set the National Council, which is now fully operational, nine specific tasks. They are to:-

(1) Identify and bring about the changes necessary to achieve the specification and implementation of standards of occupational competence to meet the needs of the full range of employment, including the needs of the self-employed;

(2) Design, monitor and adapt as necessary the new NVQ framework;

(3) Secure the implementation of that framework by accrediting the provision of approved certifying bodies;

(4) Secure comprehensive provision of vocational qualifications by the certifying bodies;

(5) Secure arrangements for quality assurance;

(6) Maintain effective liaison with those bodies having responsibilities for qualifications which given entry to, and progression within and from, the system of vocational qualifications into higher education and higher levels of professional qualifications;

(7) Collect, analyse and make available information on vocational qualifications and secure the operation of an effective, comprehensive and dependable data base;

(8) Undertake or arrange to be undertaken research and development where necessary to discharge these functions;

(9) Promote the interests of vocational education and training and, in particular, of vocational qualifications and to disseminate good practice.

D. **The Challenge**

There is thus a large task to be performed to set up the new system:-

FIRSTLY, there is a significant challenge to industry. Many studies have indicated how difficult it will be to persuade industry that training and the qualifications system which underpins it are vital for the survival of individual companies as well as industry generally. It is up to industry to respond to the challenge of the new system, which carries with it the need for a massive extension of on-the-job as well as off-the-job learning in a positive and progressive way.

SECONDLY, in addition to industry, a heavy responsibility will rest on the Training Commission to deliver a training system related to the newly identified industry bodies which will provide a logical structure within which the framework of vocational qualifications can operate.

THIRDLY, a heavy responsibility rests with the local authorities, the colleges, the schools and all those involved in the education system to adapt themselves and give massive support to the shift of the system onto a competence base. The further education system has a tradition of flexibility and responsiveness which will be tested to the limit.

FOURTHLY, for the examining and validating bodies there is a particular challenge. The existing system of qualifications will have to be adapted to incorporate the assessment of skills to specific standards, relevant knowledge and understanding and the ability to use skills and to apply knowledge and understanding to relevant tasks. City and Guilds, for which I am responsible, has been moving the whole of its examination system onto a competence base since 1981 and it has done much pioneer work with the Engineering Industrial Training Board, the Chemical Industries Association, the Association of British Travel Agents National Training Board, the Hotel and Catering Training Board and many other United Kingdom training bodies. The actions we have already taken have made clear that the setting up of a competence based system is no easy task. In particular examining and validating bodies will have to adapt to the difficulties of providing assessment and certification within the work place as well as in technical colleges; through the use of open and distance learning methods; through new developments like the Open College, which was launched in September, 1987; using the existing educational system to develop novel methods of skills testing and linking them to the normal education process. Fortunately, there is a great deal of good will for the development of the new system.

THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING REVOLUTION

Clearly the United Kingdom is in the middle of a major revolution in its vocational education and training system. The mechanism used of an evolutionary process although cumbersome at times and frustrating to those who wish to move more rapidly, does allow the best practice of the past to be carried forward into the future. The changes can fit into an accelerating evolutionary model whose characteristics are:-

(a) Strong central direction based on a careful appraisal of national objectives setting attainment targets to be achieved;

(b) Local delivery arrangements freed from bureaucratic control and administrative impediments;

(c) The addition of a vocational bias to the education system building on a core of English, Maths, Science and Technology;

(d) The development of a sophisticated competence based training system to compliment the education process whose delivery arrangements can be many and varied;

(e) A rational and coherent national vocational qualifications system delivered by a variety of agencies to set and maintain standards of vocational competence.

Clearly it is not possible to predict the outcome but progress is good so far. This revolution in both the objectives of Vocational Education and Training placing them in the highest possible national priority is surely of supreme importance for a major industrial nation which wishes to survive and prosper in the 1990's.

John Barnes
City and Guilds
Dec 1987

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